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THE GREAT PROBLEMS. By Bernardino Varisco. Translated from the Italian by R. C. Lodge, M.A. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1914. *Library of Philosophy Series*. Pp. viii, 370.

KNOW THYSELF. By Bernardino Varisco. Translated by G. Salvadori, Ph.D. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915. *Library of Philosophy Series*. Pp. xxix, 327.

In these two volumes, English readers of philosophy are introduced to Varisco for the first time in their own tongue. Those who know him only by repute—he is described by Ueberweg and Heinze as one of the most active speculative minds of our time—will welcome the addition thus made to the “Library of Philosophy.” The two books do not differ materially. Each presents, in a somewhat different form from the other, the same philosophical system, deliberately expounded for the most part without quotations from other thinkers or historical references, complete in general outline if not in detail, positive as regards its method, and furnished with profuse if not always illuminating illustration. In its general character the system and method is an example of the classical tradition in philosophy, of the belief that speculation can yield complete truth about the nature of the universe. In his search for such truth, Varisco attempts to eliminate every assumption, and in one of his confidential appendices tells us that he believes he has accomplished this task.

In *The Great Problems* are discussed in succession various traditional philosophical problems, such as sense-perception, cognition, being. The *great* problems, however, are primarily practical, not theoretical. Has the world intrinsic value? Does nature tend towards an end? Does personality survive the body? Is there, in or above things, a principle of wisdom and goodness which governs them? And the greatest of the great problems is constituted by the alternatives of Theism and Pantheism, for upon the answer to this question, it is maintained, depend the answers to the others. A general philosophical theory is required if the great problems are to be solved.

Philosophy, for Varisco, is a theory of the possibility of cognition. He endeavours to elaborate such a theory by making it as nearly as possible a simple statement of facts. His treatment of sense-perception is fundamental for his doctrine. Basing his reasoning upon the principle that nothing is to be assumed, he is led to a Phenomenalism, in which the knowing, feeling, and acting Subject is at once a relatively spontaneous centre and a *unity*

or *form* of phenomena. It is interesting to find such a theory emanating from Italy, similar as it obviously is, in certain respects, to certain recent developments in thought both in England and America. There are great differences, however, between the phenomenism of Varisco and that of William James or Mr. Bertrand Russell. There is nevertheless in all these thinkers an interesting similarity in the treatment of data of sense.

Varisco's theory of the Subject is, however, unique, and perhaps his most valuable contribution to thought. He notices that potentially a Subject *may* know all phenomena. Therefore, it must not be defined as the form or unity of such phenomena as *are* known to it. For if this be done, Varisco believes that no explanation can be given of the fact that phenomena can *become* known. What is required is a conception of the Subject which will explain this fact. Consequently, the Subject is conceived as a unity of *all* phenomena, although at any moment all phenomena, so far as any Subject is concerned, fall into three classes, namely, phenomena which are conscious, phenomena which are subconscious, and phenomena which are unconscious. But *form* apart from *matter* is nothing at all. Consequently, the Subject is not merely the form of phenomena, but also the phenomena themselves; more completely, the Subject is all phenomena in an organized form. It is maintained, for example, that when a Subject is aware of a patch of red, that patch of red is a *constituent* of that Subject (and possibly of others also). Something further is still needed, however. Development must be explained. Consequently, the Subject is conceived as a centre of relative spontaneity. The doctrine thus briefly adumbrated explains the name of the second of the present volumes (*Know Thyself*), for if it is true, in knowing oneself one knows all things.

Ethical results follow at once. The first values are found in a satisfaction and dissatisfaction which come as effects of free or obstructed activity. Satisfaction results from free activity, it is maintained, because such activity constitutes a development of the Subject's implicit content, and is therefore good, while obstructed activity prevents such development, and is therefore bad. Considerable emphasis is placed by Varisco on activity as source of value, and his ethical position is in consequence a kind of qualified pragmatism. From the conception that self-development is the good, combined with the theory that the Subject is

Vol. XXVI.—No. 2.

the unity of all phenomena, it follows easily that the ethical end is continual self-development.

But is such development possible? Will not death prevent it? In the appendices to *Know Thyself*, Varisco discusses in what sense the problem of immortality is valid as a problem. Consonantly with his phenomenism, he maintains that the problem in one form, namely, that in which the Subject is conceived as a substance, is fictitious. The real problem, he says, is whether the particular *unity of phenomena* we call a conscious Subject will survive death; for the conception of immortality does not fall with the conception of substantiality. But this question, like the supreme question of all, that which asks, "Theism or Pantheism?" is left unsolved by Varisco. The obstruction in the way of a solution is believed to be but temporary, and the author decides for himself, though for no *reasons* at all, in favour of Theism.

The present works exhibit throughout a high moral enthusiasm. The author's style is terse and unadorned. The expression of his thought is vigorous, although there is in general a far higher proportion of confident statement than of argument. He is obviously interested above all things in the destiny of man.

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POLITICAL IDEALS; THEIR NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT. By C. Delisle Burns. Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1915. Pp. 311.

This is an unusually well-planned, well-written and interesting book. Its thesis is "that modern politics is governed by the conceptions men have of a state of things which would be better than the present." By this Mr. Burns seems to mean very much what Mr. A. V. Dicey meant in his *Law and Public Opinion*, with this difference—that while Mr. Dicey showed in detail with what sensitive closeness the development of English law and institutions followed the current of public opinion in a single century, Mr. Burns aims at showing the same thing happening as it were in bulk. He holds that all through history the main factors determining the nature of political institutions have been these conceptions, which he calls political ideals and which Mr.